



Over the Influence Presents

Mark Whalen

Close My Eyes

19 August to 25 September 2022



Mark Whalen, *Close My Eyes*, 2022, Acrylic, oil and aluminum component on canvas, 101.6 by 76.2 cm canvas size, 40 by 30 in canvas size, Photo courtesy of the Artist and Over the Influence

Over the Influence, Bangkok is pleased to present, *Close My Eyes*, a solo exhibition of new paintings, sculptures, and wall works by LA-based artist Mark Whalen. This is the artist's third showing with the gallery and his first in Southeast Asia.

Close My Eyes, features the graphic sculptures that Whalen is widely recognized for — human-like heads and hands that are often paired with everyday objects to explore the uncanny relationships between object and person. Whalen has always found the figure interesting and utilizes it to push his practice conceptually and aesthetically. For this exhibition, Whalen expands his practice to include painting, and wall works — though diverse in media, the artworks remain cohesive as all incorporate a sculptural element, retain the figure, and are deliberately ambiguous.

Whalen's maquettes are born in the digital realm — without gender, physical body, or any other attributes aside from their neutrality and fluidity. The artist intentionally creates these figures to be avatars for a wide spectrum of human experiences. Through the addition of a single feature or gesture, the figures become animated to instill laughter, surprise, cynicism, or indolence as well as fears like loneliness, isolation, and helplessness. Whalen shares, "My style of sculptural storytelling could be described as the stacking of disturbances, conundrums, and entertaining questions about life."

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Whalen fabricates his sculptures with polyurethane and chrome on cast aluminum, then spray paints. The incorporation of sculptural items in the paintings and wall works allows the artist to further play with the materiality between the soft, sleek surfaces and colors of the two and three dimensional planes, as well dynamism in the compositions themselves. *“Through unspoken words I like to create very ambiguous settings where the figures explore a suggestion of amusing enigmas. The concept of being behind a window alone was interesting to me as it was a nice setting to play with the message in the painting. From finding beauty in grotesque objects such as a pickle, or having a tongue tied with a bow suggesting silence. I like to explore the quickness in highly expressive gestures that we come across daily”.*

The title of the exhibition, *Close My Eyes*, nods to the works in the exhibition. The sculptural elements in *Take a Breath*, hang below the bottom of the painting to reveal two extended thumbs that are captured in a moment where they have just closed the blue figure’s eyes. The gentle lilac-colored gloves and complementary hues of the painting subdue the tension of the precariously balanced pickle, and the implied grip of the fingers squeezing behind the picture plane. In a wall work, *A Moment Pause Untitled*, the artist spares the anecdotal nuances to clearly reveal the fuchsia face encompassed in a two-handed grip, completely covering the figure's eyes, while appearing to be precariously floating in space. In fact, many of the artworks in *Close My Eyes*, are indeed depicted with their eyelids closed - asleep, caught in a blink, or another state entirely. Cleverly, Whalen presents an additional conundrum for the viewer because in order to interpret the works, one must visually perceive them.

The seamlessness with which Whalen oscillates between digital and physical realms to create a body of works that conflates notions of these realms with materials and concepts that both instill materiality into an otherwise analog space, while animating the analog in a physical space, to create something entirely and uniquely his own.

Whalen’s highly crafted artworks, physically and conceptually continue to question the frontiers/boundaries between the spaces in which we exist. Intentionally ambiguous, the works are relevant and open today’s viewer’s interpretations, and will continue to hinge on mood and preconceptions of the views who experience them over time and place.

Exhibition Dates

19 August to 25 September 2022

Location

Over the Influence Bangkok
81 Tri Mit Road
Talat Noi, Samphanthawong
Bangkok, Thailand

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